United Nations SSC/18/2

South-South cooperation for development

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High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation
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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to actions arising from previous sessions of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, notably at its seventeenth session, in 2012, including actions arising out of the consideration of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on South-South and triangular cooperation in the United Nations system and the related note by the Secretary-General, as well as further consideration of the framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation, as noted by the High-level Committee at its seventeenth session

Framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC/17/3) is submitted to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation at its eighteenth session pursuant to decision 17/1 of the Committee. In that decision, the Committee, at its seventeenth session, recognized the guidelines as an evolving document, requested the Secretariat to take into account the perspectives, concerns, ideas and experiences of Member States when updating them, and decided to consider them further at its eighteenth session, in 2014.

2. At the intersessional meeting of the High-level Committee on 4 June 2013, a group of Member States encouraged the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and all relevant United Nations system organizations to take forward the application of the operational guidelines in a flexible, consultative and practical manner at the headquarters and field levels and to identify key lessons and experiences from their application of those guidelines.[1] They also indicated their

* SSC/18/L.2
[1] SSC/17/IM/L.2, para. 13.

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interest in hearing, at the eighteenth session of the Committee, about the lessons learned from the application of the guidelines.

3. Against that background, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation is working to update the guidelines, taking into account the concerns, ideas and experiences of Member States, as well as the lessons drawn from the application of the guidelines by United Nations organizations and agencies. To that end, the Office, in the course of preparing for the eighteenth session of the High-level Committee, requested United Nations system organizations to report on their experiences and lessons learned. In response, a number of them highlighted their support, in compliance with the guidelines, of South-South cooperation in areas such as convening policy dialogues; mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation into their key policy frameworks; formulating guidelines and strategies; implementing South-South and triangular cooperation programmes and capacity-building initiatives, including knowledge exchange mechanisms; building innovative and inclusive partnerships; and undertaking research, analysis, monitoring and reporting. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for example, indicated that it was formulating a new project modality and new cost-sharing arrangements for South-South and triangular cooperation that would enable multiple countries to contribute efficiently, effectively and accountably to joint results. The modality would enable UNDP to overcome operational and programmatic challenges inherent to its existing policies, procedures, rules and regulations for supporting multiple countries with shared results. The modality is a good example of a United Nations agency moving beyond the traditional sharing of knowledge and experiences to advance the shared capacity development objectives of two or more developing countries through regional and interregional collective actions, as encouraged in the guidelines.

4. Similarly, the International Labour Organization has formulated an institutional strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation entitled "South-South and triangular cooperation: the way forward". The strategy will provide an important mechanism for leveraging resources and expertise, in particular by facilitating the transfer of relevant knowledge and experiences among emerging economies and developing countries. Other organizations of the United Nations system, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization, are engaging in various South-South and triangular cooperation initiatives in a manner consistent with the common results indicators contained in the framework of operational guidelines.

5. While these findings are encouraging, the relatively short implementation period from the intersessional meeting of the High-level Committee in June 2013 through the first two months of 2014 was not adequate to enable the organizations of the United Nations system to acquire the requisite experiences from which to draw lessons for a meaningful and substantive revision of the guidelines. In addition, consultations with members of the Bureau of the High-level Committee led to the suggestion that such updating would have to include more substantive elements and experiences gained, beyond addressing the issue of the reference in the guidelines to the Busan outcome document, which had been a cause of contention at the seventeenth session of the Committee. The preferred approach would be to make any necessary changes in tandem with the improvements that emanate from the

experiences gained by the organizations of the United Nations system in the course of implementing the guidelines.

6. It is suggested that Member States may wish either to officially approve, at the eighteenth session of the High-level Committee, the current operational guidelines on United Nations support to South-South and triangular cooperation for their wider application in mainstreaming South-South and triangular cooperation by all relevant members of the United Nations system, or to defer such approval until sufficient lessons have been learned to enable the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to make more substantive improvements and updates to the guidelines for further consideration at subsequent sessions of the Committee.